

Rethinking Drinking

Kailash Lal, D.O.

The coronavirus pandemic has been difficult for all of us. We have all had to make sacrifices and changes to our day to day routine. While coping with this pandemic, many may have noted an increase in their alcohol consumption. For example, the sale of canned mixed drinks is up 160% this year compared to last. Unfortunately, too much alcohol can lead to serious consequences.

Alcohol-associated liver disease is a spectrum of liver injury ranging from alcoholic fatty liver disease, acute alcohol hepatitis (or liver inflammation) to alcohol-associated cirrhosis. The liver is an amazing organ and is capable of healing and regeneration - to a certain point! As the liver continues to heal itself from alcohol-related injury it eventually develops hardened scar tissue which is irreversible and known as cirrhosis. Cirrhosis of the liver can eventually lead to long-term complications including: confusion (encephalopathy), fluid build up in your belly (ascites), large veins in your esophagus (varices), liver cancer and death.

Over the past 20 years the rates of alcohol-related liver disease have been rising. The degree to which

the liver is affected by alcohol is dependent on the amount of alcohol consumed, the length of time one has been drinking, genetics and diet. Drinking a large volume of alcohol daily for greater than 10 years has been shown to increase your risk for developing cirrhosis. Those who have underlying liver disease from viral hepatitis B or C, fatty liver disease, or other genetic liver diseases are also more susceptible to worsening liver disease.

Alcohol use is common in the United States and many people drink moderate amounts of alcohol without significant consequences. **General recommendations currently report that the average US adult can safely consume about 100 g of alcohol per week. This translates to about 1 standard drink a day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men.** This definition refers to the amount consumed on any single day and is not intended as an average over several days. This means that binge drinking one or two days a week is not considered to be a safe habit even if it is within the definition of "moderate" consumption. Binge drinking is defined as a pattern of drinking



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The physicians and staff of the Center for Digestive Health & Nutrition are pleased to welcome the addition Dr. Kailash Lal to our medical staff. Doctor Lal is a Penn State graduate (2008) where he majored in Biology. He also received an M.B.A. in Healthcare Administration from St. Joseph's Univ. in Philadelphia and was awarded a Certificate in Biomedical Science from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine.

He received his medical degree from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in Philadelphia. He completed his Internal Medicine residency training at Rowan School of Osteopathic Medicine in New Jersey, where he also completed specialty fellowship training in Gastroenterology. He was chosen as Chief Fellow, a prestigious award.

He is an active member of the American Osteopathic Association, the American College of Gastroenterology, the American Gastroenterology Association, and the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. He currently resides in Pittsburgh with his wife, who is from the Pittsburgh area, and young daughter. Dr. Lal enjoys traveling with his family. His hobbies include hiking, reading, cooking and watching Penn State



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usually corresponding to 5 or more drinks on a single occasion for men or 4 or more drinks on a single occasion for women, generally within about 2 hours. The chart shows what one standard drink translates to in different kinds of beverages. As you can see from the chart, it does not matter if your preferred drink of choice is beer, wine or liquor - the deciding factor will always be the amount of alcohol that you consume.

What does this mean for you?

First of all, if you believe you or someone you know is drinking too much alcohol - you should know there is help! Contact our office and we will be happy to help you!

What are some signs that you may have a problem with alcohol? Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. Do you sometimes feel the need to cut back on alcohol?
2. Do you ever feel annoyed by others asking about your drinking habits?
3. Have you ever felt guilty about drinking?
4. Have you ever felt you needed a drink first thing in the morning (eye-opener) to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover?

If you answered “yes” to 2 or more of the questions above, you are likely drinking too much. If you are drinking more than the recommended amount, it is advisable to cut back on your alcohol consumption. If you have a known history of liver

disease, cirrhosis or hepatitis B or C you should completely stop drinking. If you believe you have been drinking excessively for a long time, you should follow up with our office to make sure you don't have any signs of liver damage.

Alcohol when consumed in excessive amounts can lead to many dangerous effects including loss of consciousness, poor decision making, risky and/or violent behavior, confusion, coma, breathing difficulties, car accidents and even death. Alcohol begins to enter the blood stream with the first sip. It is important to remember that driving after any amount of alcohol consumption can be dangerous to you and those around you. Also remember, if you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, then it is unsafe to consume any amount of alcohol.

So if you are going to partake in alcohol make sure you do it safely and sensibly!

This is what one drink looks like

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, moderate drinking is up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. A standard drink contains 14 grams of pure alcohol.

